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Letter dated 15 October 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Costa Rica to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to inform you that, on 22 November 1999, the Inter-American System for the Protection of Human Rights will hold an official ceremony to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the American Convention on Human Rights and the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights.

The American Convention on Human Rights, or Pact of San Jose, Costa Rica, was adopted on 22 November 1969 at the Inter-American Specialized Conference on Human Rights, held in San Jose. It lists the fundamental rights and freedoms which the States parties undertake to respect and establishes the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. The Convention entered into force on 18 July 1978, when the eleventh instrument of ratification had been deposited. The Court, the judicial body set up under the Convention, was established on 3 September 1979, with its headquarters in San Jose.

To date, 25 member States of the Organization of American States have ratified or acceded to the Convention. The jurisdiction of the Court in matters of litigation has been accepted by 21 States.

The Inter-American System for the Protection of Human Rights constitutes the last judicial resort in cases of violations of fundamental rights by agents of the State. The entities of the System have made an invaluable contribution to strengthening democracy, developing international law and protecting fundamental rights on the American continent.

The Court is the jurisdictional organ of the Inter-American System and its jurisdiction applies in both litigation and consultation. In its litigation capacity the Court hears cases of alleged violations of human rights. If it determines that there has been a violation of the obligations laid down in the Convention, it can order that the injured party should be guaranteed the enjoyment of his violated right or freedom. Access to the Court presupposes that internal remedies to restore or compensate for the rights in question, or to render justice without delay, have been exhausted. Moreover, where appropriate, the Court can order that the consequences of the measure or situation that brought about the violation of the rights

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in question should be redressed and that the injured party should be paid fair compensation. In its advisory role, the Court has the power to interpret the Convention and other international human rights instruments.

The commemorative events will be held with the sponsorship of the Government of Costa Rica, the approval of the General Assembly of the Organization of American States and the collaboration of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights. Those taking part will include representatives of the member States of the Organization of American States, members of the Inter-American Court and the Inter-American Commission and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The ceremony will be held in the context of Human Rights Week, during which the Government of Costa Rica will celebrate not only the anniversaries mentioned above but also the fiftieth anniversary of the abolition of the army, the fiftieth anniversary of the Political Constitution of 1949 and the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Constitutional Division of the Supreme Court of Justice.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter distributed for information to the General Assembly in connection with agenda items 116 and 154.

(*Signed*) Bernd **Niehaus**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative